

Mr. SAM HUGHES. Were there any big headlines in the newspapers about these?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. Not yet; there may be to-morrow. Now, what a terrible thing for my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) to have armed the volunteers with such a rifle as that. I am not going to trouble the House by following the long weary reading which the hon. member (Mr. Worthington) made of certain reports which he wanted to place on 'Hansard,' but I have here a statement giving the whole thing boiled down. What it took the hon. gentleman two hours of our valuable time to read is here. It shows the number of damaged rifles, ranged under the headings 'Serviceable, Repairable' and 'Unserviceable.' And in this whole list there is not one rifle that is not put down as 'serviceable.' Of all the list that the hon. gentleman read, every one is mentioned here by my officials who take the responsibility for this, as being 'serviceable' and 'repairable' and not one 'unserviceable.' It happens—and a great deal was made of that—that there is a return of a large number damaged at Halifax, no fewer than 257. There are also 36 in Militia District No. 8 and 38 at Quebec. These are the only large numbers except at Halifax. The rifles were issued to all the districts throughout Canada and subjected to the same tests. I cannot account for it. I shall make further investigation. Whether it is due to the fact that there are in Halifax a lot of old English soldiers who had been accustomed to using the Lee-Enfield and who were not properly trained in the use of the Ross rifle, or whether there were officers who were prejudiced against the Ross rifle and in favor of the other, I am not prepared to say. But I intend to find out. I shall make it my business to find out. It is certainly a remarkable thing that nearly all these complaints come from Halifax. And yet there is not one unserviceable rifle, not one rifle that could not be repaired and put in proper shape by any armourer. Here is what appears in the end of the statement:

"On receipt of these reports the inspector of small arms sends for such rifles or parts of rifles as cannot be repaired locally, or else forwards such spare parts as are necessary to enable the repairs to be made locally.

The general nature of the damage to these rifles is such that all are easily repairable."

In that connection I wish to repeat what I said in the earlier part of my remarks. And I will read this so that there may be no doubt about as to Mark I.

"Although the details are not complete, there is every reason to believe that the complaints made against the Mark I rifle can be met and the arm put to very good use. For this purpose they have been recalled

into stores and replaced by a later issue of March 11, and when the proper time arrives the necessary changes can be made keeping the Mark I rifle as it is at present, and only remedying the complaint incorrectly described as blow back of the bolt. The very trifling expense of putting in a cross pin will do all that is required."

As Mark II.

"The majority of complaints have been made about the earlier issues of Mark II."

That is the Halifax issue.

"And can be overcome in many cases if not all—"

These are the words of the inspector endorsed by the Master General of Ordnance, and I am sure every one of them can be made right.

"—merely by the issue of spare parts to be fitted by a competent local armourer."

And this is the sum in toto of the indictment made by the hon. gentleman this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I insisted upon the Ross rifle being sent out to the troops all over the country, and in this respect the Ross rifle has been treated unfairly and differently from the Lee-Enfield. The Lee-Enfield was brought here about the time I assumed my present position and I wondered then what it was intended to do with it. When I asked: Where is the Lee-Enfield, rifle I was told: Oh, it was packed away carefully—apparently in cotton wool, you could not get it out, they would not issue it and it was years and years before that rifle was issued except in camps of instruction to allow the militiamen to see it and fire a few shots. That is the way the Lee-Enfield was treated. But the Ross was unfairly treated, and I am responsible to some extent because owing to the unjust criticism that was being made and the prejudice that was being created all over the country in order to injure the rifle, I thought it desirable that it should be issued, and it was issued before it should have been. I wish to say now and at once that at the camps this year I intend that the Ross rifle and the Ross rifle alone shall do all the target practice. The Lee-Enfield will not be used in this year's camps and we will have a still better test than we have had of the qualities of the Ross rifle. We are not afraid to use the Ross rifle. The Ross rifle is not dangerous, and the statement that it is dangerous is a diabolical invention intended to injure the rifle, intended to injure the factory, intended to alarm the militia of Canada. A more outrageous campaign was never undertaken in Canada and such a campaign was never thought of in either England or the United States. You could not find a man in England or the United States who would abuse his position in the army of either of those countries and in the parliament of either